

Last Minute Memorandum

To: STATE BOARD MEMBERS

Date: May 7, 2003

From: Geno Flores, Deputy Superintendent, Assessment and Accountability Branch

Re: ITEM #4

**Subject: CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAMINATION (CAHSEE):
INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, PRESENTATION OF THE REPORT
REQUIRED BY AB 1609.**

Please insert the following attachment:

[Attachment 1](#): CAHSEE AB 1609 Study – PowerPoint Presentation to: The California State Board of Education (Pages 1-5)

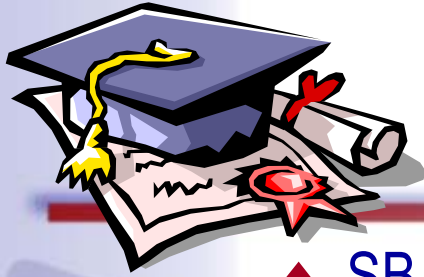


CAHSEE AB 1609 Study

Presentation to:
The California State Board of Education

Date:
Wednesday, May 7, 2003

Prepared by:
Dr. Laress L. Wise
HumRRO



Background

- ◆ SB-2X, passed in 1999, established the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)
 - ◆ HSEE Standards Panel was established to recommend the content of the English-language arts and mathematics sections of the exam.
 - ◆ Exam content was adopted by the State Board in December 2000.
 - ◆ Beginning with the Class of 2004, students must pass the exam to receive a high school diploma.
 - ◆ An independent evaluation of the CAHSEE began in January 2000.
- ◆ AB-1609, passed in 2001, requires CDE, with guidance from the State Board, to contract for a study to determine if:
 - ◆ The CAHSEE test development process
 - ◆ The implementation of standards-based instructionmeet standards required for a high school graduation test.



Study Design

- ◆ The evaluation of CAHSEE test development and standards-based instruction included the following activities:
 - ◆ Reviewing test development documentation against requirements in *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*.
 - ◆ Administering surveys to a representative sample of California high schools, including charter, alternate, and continuation schools, and to middle-grade feeder schools associated with many of these schools.
 - ◆ The principal and up to 40 teachers were surveyed at each school. Principals provided data on school-wide policies and identified relevant courses. Teachers provided information about each course identified by the principals.
 - ◆ Responses were received from 298 high schools and 173 middle schools covering 3,170 different high school and 2,006 middle school courses.
 - ◆ Visiting 62 schools and conducting 499 interviews with principals and teachers at these schools.
 - ◆ Analyzing CAHSEE passing rates for each of California's 1,843 high schools and using this information in assessing the effectiveness of instruction for the schools participating in the surveys and interviews.



Findings

General Finding 1: The development of the CAHSEE meets all of the test standards for use as a graduation requirement.

- ◆ ***Issues for further discussion:***
 - ◆ Standard 13.5 requires that students have adequate opportunity to learn the material covered by tests used to make important decisions about them. The Board must decide, based on this report and other information, whether current opportunities are sufficient.
 - ◆ Standard 13.7 requires that important decisions not be based on a single test score. Students can take the CAHSEE many times, and there could be additional ways for students to demonstrate the required competency.
 - ◆ Further documentation may be needed to support other uses of CAHSEE scores, including diagnostic interpretations based on content area scores or gain scores and establishment of additional levels of achievement for use in school accountability.



Findings (Continued)

General Finding 2. The CAHSEE requirement has been a major factor leading to (a) dramatically increased coverage of the California Content Standards at both the high school and middle school levels and (b) development or improvement of courses providing help for students who have difficulty mastering these standards.

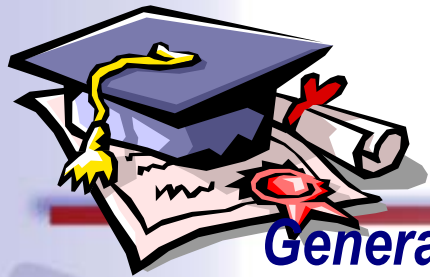
- ◆ Coverage of the California Content Standards has increased significantly since 1999 at high school *and* middle school levels.
- ◆ New textbooks, offering more complete coverage of the California Content Standards, have been adopted in the last two years.
- ◆ New courses have been introduced in the high schools to provide additional opportunities for students who did not master the required standards in earlier grades.



Findings (Continued)

General Finding 3. Available evidence indicates that many courses of initial instruction and remedial courses have only limited effectiveness in helping students master the required standards.

- ◆ Through January 2003, cumulative passing rates have risen to 81% for ELA and 62% for mathematics, up about 10 percentage points from July 2002, BUT passing rates in mathematics are still very low for English learners (37%) and for special education students (22%).
- ◆ In half of California's high schools, fewer than 50 percent of students in the Class of 2004 have passed the mathematics section of the CAHSEE (through January 2003).
- ◆ All schools reporting high levels of content coverage for three years or more had high passing rates (above 75%) for both ELA and mathematics. Passing rates for mathematics averaged only 22% for schools that had not yet implemented instruction closely aligned with the content standards.



Findings (Continued)

General Finding 4. Lack of prerequisite skills may prevent many students from receiving the benefits of courses that provide instruction in relevant content standards. Inadequate student motivation and lack of strong parental support may also play a contributing role in limiting the effectiveness of these courses.

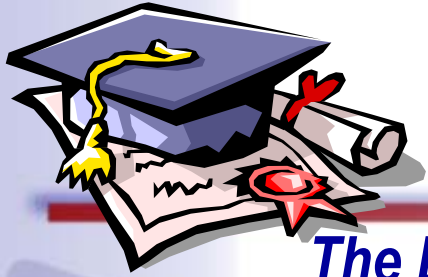
- ◆ More than half the teachers of supplemental and remedial courses reported that most of their students did not yet have prerequisite skills; for courses targeting special education students, 72% of the teachers gave this response.
- ◆ In interviews, teachers expressed concern with student motivation and attendance; many principals reported that fewer than 25% of students who had not passed the CAHSEE participated in available 2002 summer courses.
- ◆ Teacher credentials and experience were not a concern for most courses, although 22% of the math courses targeting special education students had teachers without appropriate credentials. Most teachers of courses targeting special populations had considerable experience with these populations.



Findings (Continued)

General Finding 5. Many factors suggest that the effectiveness of standards-based instruction will improve for each succeeding class after the Class of 2004, but the speed with which passing rates will improve is currently unknown.

- ◆ The Class of 2006 was in 7th grade when the CAHSEE blueprints were adopted and also when standards-aligned textbooks for mathematics were identified.
- ◆ The Class of 2008 is finishing 7th grade this year, when the CAHSEE Student Study Guides will be released; compared to 11th grade for the Class of 2004.
- ◆ Middle school principals report dramatic increases in the proportion of 8th graders taking some algebra (from < 50% for the Class of 2006 to 67% estimated for the Class of 2008).
- ◆ Students in the Class of 2004 will have 3 or 4 more opportunities to take the CAHSEE, but 25% or more will not pass without very dramatic intervention.
- ◆ Initial passing rates for the Class of 2005 (those who tested in March 2003) should be available by June of this year.



Recommendations

The Board must weigh competing risks and benefits in deciding whether to continue or defer the CAHSEE requirement for the Class of 2004.

If the requirement is continued, options for reducing concerns about whether students have had adequate instructional opportunities include:

- ◆ Increasing the passing rate by lowering the minimum passing scores, reducing the content coverage, or by adopting a compensatory policy (e.g., allowing students to pass with a total score of 700 rather than requiring scores of 350 or higher on each section of the CAHSEE).
- ◆ Identifying additional ways for students to demonstrate mastery.
 - ◆ Some states allow students to petition for waivers based on coursework or other evidence; others provide alternate assessment formats.
- ◆ Creating options to recognize effort and achievement for students who can not pass the CAHSEE.



Recommendations (Continued)

If the CAHSEE requirement is deferred, options for maintaining efforts to help students to achieve essential skills include:

- ◆ Offering a diploma seal or certificate for students who pass the CAHSEE or noting satisfaction of CAHSEE requirements on transcripts.
- ◆ Encouraging districts to include CAHSEE as part of their own graduation requirements, releasing one or more forms for districts to use, or continuing to provide statewide testing for students who do not pass.
- ◆ Continuing to use the CAHSEE for school accountability
 - ◆ As part of the Academic Performance Index (API).
 - ◆ In meeting high school core knowledge assessment requirements under No Child Left Behind (NCLB).